

# Buck Island

## *National Wildlife Refuge*

photo: USFWS



photo: E. C. Oaks



photo: J. E. Saliva



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### Refuge Facts

- Established: 1969.
- Acres: 45.
- Location: the island is located 2 miles from the south coast of St. Thomas.
- Administered under Caribbean Islands NWR office.

### Natural History

- The island was transferred to the Fish and Wildlife Service due to "its value for migratory birds." However, birds rarely use the refuge because of an overwhelming abundance of black rats.
- Although the rocky coastline offers little in the way of recreation potential, the surrounding waters contain reefs and a shipwreck that attract large numbers of snorkelers, divers, and boaters.
- The Coast Guard maintains a lighthouse on the refuge.

### Financial Impact of Refuge

- No staff.
- 100 visitors annually.

### Refuge Objectives

To manage and protect natural plant and wildlife communities.

### Management Tools

Law enforcement.

### Public Use Opportunities

- Hiking.
- Bird watching.

### Questions and Answers

*Is the refuge open to the public?*

Yes, this island refuge is open during daylight hours, seven days a week (boat access only).

*Are there birdwatching opportunities available?*

Little nesting occurs due to the presence of introduced rats; however, visitors may see red-billed tropic birds, frigate birds, terns, and other species in the vicinity of the island.

*Is there a lighthouse on the island that is open to the public?*

The historic Buck Island Lighthouse is closed to the public. It is now in a deteriorated condition and no longer operational. A modern aid to navigation light is operating on the island.

*Are diving opportunities available at the refuge?*

Federal property does not include waters surrounding the island; however, spectacular reefs are in close proximity to the refuge and commercial dive trips are offered out of St. Thomas, USVI.

*I thought Buck Island belonged to the U.S. Park Service. Are there two Buck Islands in the Caribbean?*

Yes, Buck Island Reef National Monument (belonging to the U.S. Park Service) is located just off the north coast of St. Croix, USVI. Buck Island National Wildlife Refuge is about 2 miles from the south coast of St. Thomas, USVI.